Fire and Water

By LOUISE J. STRONG.

The fever scorched him physically and befogged him mentally. He tossed in a hot, restless haze, at times babbling childishly of "mother"—the mother whose loss three years before had sent him to the far west to try to forget his homeliness. The struggle to master the new conditions attendant on ranch life had taken him out of himself and done him good, and as success crowned his efforts dreams of a home again, made so by the presence of a sweet faced girl wife, lighted his toil.

They were only dreams as yet, for he held himself humbly and had hesitated to offer his love until he felt that his affairs were on a firm basis financially, as they would be when his present abundant crop was harvested.

In his partial delirium and hazy wandering he muttered now the long repressed confession, whispering it eagerly with feverish impatience for the response his heart hoped for.

At length the silence which lay like the pall of desolation upon the lonely little shack was broken by heavy footsteps on the planks at the door, and a burly fellow strode in with a noisy greeting: "Hello, Harris! Laid up, hey?"

The sick man roused to consciousness and smiled feebly: "How do, Lamson. Glad you came in. Yes, I've been laid up a bit—can't remember how long—fever muddles my head." His speech was broken and dragged thickly.

"Ain't wanting to eat much, I s'pose, and good thing that is, too, for an old bach that's got nobody."

Harris winced. Mother had been in his sick fancy so much and with such vividness that his bereavement seemed but a few days back. With an effort he replied:

"I want nothing but water, and Slade brings me a pailful mornings, when he doesn't forget, as he did today." He gestured toward the empty bucket on the chair beside the bed, but the visitor did not notice it—nor the longing in the fever red eyes and the cracked lips.

"Doctor, of course?" he intimated briskly.

"No; Slade wouldn't go for him, and no one else's been in."

"Slade wouldn't go! Ha, ha! Guess not much! You don't get the old ground hog that far from his hole back of the hill. Everybody's busier than in sheep shearing time, you know, harvesting their grain. Reason no one's been along, I reckon. I'm through in fine shape, I tell you, and I've promised myself and gang to Snyder for a week. And, man, you'd ought to be looking after yours. It's spoiling fast, I noticed." He laughed at the startled expression that widened the hollow eyes. "Forgot it, had you? Well, you want to see to it right away. I must mosey. I'm out on a sweet errand. Got my new house done. It's a beaut, too, and furnished tiptop. And now the cage is ready I'm going up to settle the date of taking home my bird. Lizzie's fought shy, but she'll pull steady when we're tied all right. Ha, ha!"

"Lizzie?" Harris repeated vaguely, his voice hesitating and troubled.

"Sure! Lizzie Bradley-Lamson. Kind o' tidy name, I take it; something like those swell New Yorkers. Ha, ha!" He roared boisterously at his flash of wit. "Well, hope you'll pull up soon. So long!" He stamped away, whistling, leaving the door open.

In the silence that again closed upon him Harris lay and stared out at the quivering heat waves and little dust eddies that whirled in at times, aggravating his burning heat and thirst. But he did not notice them. He was striving to steady his throbbing brain and analyze the torturing inner sense of pain and loss which now intensified his bodily distress.

The crop—the c-r-o-p—that was all right. It was great. He could put up the dainty cottage he had planned so often these last months, since the promise of early summer had shown such abundant fulfillment in the ripening fields. The crop—the crop! Who said it was spoiling? It was all right. He would begin on it today, when he had a drink. He could drink the well dry. He fumbled clumsily with the bedding and essayed to rise, but fell back inertly, a little foolish smile on the parched lips. His head was so big! He had not known one's head could be so big and heavy. And the crop? The crop was all right. He would build the cottage—for—for Lizzie. Lizzie! He cried out hoarsely, with a pang of anguish at the sudden dull recognition of his loss. There was no Lizzie for him—none—none—nor had been. What mattered the crop? Let it spoil. What mattered anything now Lizzie—Liz-z-i-e—bird—cage—Lizzie Brad—Liz? He scowled impatiently. He could not get the name right. His head was so big. He was so hot—burning.

Mother! Where was mother? Was she in the fiery lake that Elder Watson had so scared the little boys with? He hadn't meant to be a bad boy—mother knew—she would keep him, but he was so hot—burning! Water, water! Lizzie—Liz—zie Brad—ley-Lamson! Lizzie Bradley? Lamson! The perplexed look deepened to a frown of pain and trouble. He had found her name, and as he drifted further and further from consciousness he carried her name with him back to little boyhood, tangling it with his brother's, but never losing it entirely again. Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—be careful Davy—mother said not to go so near the bonfire—but he did, Joe, the careless one, and now he was burning, burning—mother—Lizzie Bradley-Lamson.

"Oh, you poor, poor boy! Bring some water, quick!"

Did some one speak, or was it—again the little, foolish smile cracked the parched lips. He had known mother would come—she always did when her boys were hurt, even if they did it carelessly themselves—but she did not know how big his head was or she would not try to lift it. Oh, he was at the old spring drinking—drinking!

"He must not have too much at once, the poor boy!" A warm rain fell upon his face; the cup vanished; his groping, trembling hands could not find it. How could he have too much when he was burning? That wasn't fair, Davie, when his head was so big that he couldn't run.

"The brute—the perfect brute, to go off and leave him like this! Never even get him water!"

Was that father? No; Tige had not hurt him. It was the fire—and heedless Joe—where was the spring—and—the cup. There! Mother was bathing his burning head and face and neck, his hands and arms. He smiled at her and whispered "Good," and again the warm rain dropped upon him, and his big, heavy head was lifted and laid—why, it must be the cool, damp moss above the spring! It was heavenly! If it was not for the dreadful something that hurt so about Lizzie—Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—he could—Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—Liz.

"I don't know that any of us can say much for ourselves. Let such a sick man be here alone for days—never come near him, so busy hustling for the dollars—but all the same, Lamson's a brute, with less feeling than a hog! And the thought that Lizzie'd—faugh!"

Lizzie—Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—Liz.

"Don't say that, Joe Harris! Can't you understand? Lamson lied!" Lizzie—Bradley—Lamson—

"Oh, never mind, mother. He's too light headed yet. But the fever is cooling, and the doctor'll be here soon. Look out yonder. Ben's got a crowd, all right! Joe's grain 'll be in the stack in short order, and it isn't hurt yet, not an atom, in spite of Lamson's know it all verdict!"

Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—he was hurt. Did Lizzie Bradley-Lamson—no, he wouldn't—wouldn't put out his tongue. It was too stiff and big, like his head. And he wouldn't have a spoon in his mouth.

"Here, young man, you take this! Swallow it. Do you hear? Some one shook him slightly, with the order, and he swallowed and grinned and said it was Davy's cough drops, and it was Lizzie Bradley-Lamson who—who made the fire. Was that little Sis who cried out sharply and sobbed? Davy mustn't hurt little Sis. He, Joe, was all right, only Liz-zie.

"Oh, shut up!" the gruff one commanded. "I'm the doctor, and I say for you to drop it and go to sleep."

There was mother again, with the gourd from the spring, and he drank and drank till they took it away, and then he slid down and down and out where there was only a cool, quiet blackness.

It was late the next day. The sun was sending its level rays across the door when Joe Harris came to himself and looked about with a calm and growing consciousness.

There was a faroff, cheery sound of busy machines. Through the open window he could see his fields swarming with men and teams. The food wagon and eating tent stood back by the well, the important cook bustling over a fire. His room was cool and fresh. Flowers stood upon his little homemade table with the doctor's medicine glass.

Bit by bit he studied it out, and as he recognized Mr. Bradley and the boys and other neighbors and Mrs. Bradley herself putting his freshly washed shirts upon the line his eyes filled, and he murmured a faint "God bless them!"

At the sound there was a stir by the head of the bed, and a girl with anxious eyes leaned over him and touched his forehead with a shy little hand.

He looked at her a moment; then he muttered feebly, questioningly, "Lizzie Bradley-Lamson?"

With a rush of tender tears she laid her warm pink cheek against his, murmuring: "No, Joe, dear; no! Lizzie Bradley Harris!"

The Apathy of the Chorus Girl.

The ambitions of a chorus girl, as a rule, die young and as many refuse lines as accept them. There was a girl, one of four sisters who were all in the chorus of various musical organizations. One night at the Grand Opera House in New York the soubrette of the company was too ill to appear, and her understudy was also absent. In his predicament the stage manager appealed to this particular chorus girl to go on and read the lines as well as she could. The girl said she would not only read the lines, but could sing the songs as well, all of which she did, and did with confidence and ability, and for the first time in her life had a spotlight follow her about the stage and heard waves of applause rush over the footlights which were intended for her and her only. After it was all over she said quite casually to the admiring throng that surrounded her: "There's nothing in it, girls. I've been a chorus girl eight years, but I'm too old to be a principal. "I hope it'll never happen again."—From "Behind the Scenes," by Charles Belmont Davis, in Outing Magazine.

Scotch Bulls.

Two Scotchmen were discussing the relative merits of churchyards and cemeteries when one of them boldly expressed his aversion to the latter burial places in the remark, "I'd raither no dee ava than be buried in sic a place." To which his companion retorted, "Weel, if I'm spared in life an' health, I'll gang naewhere else."

A "Nobel" Example.

"There's Teddy gets made president for foightin', and then he's ag'in it and gets $40,000."

"Oh, the luck av him!"—New York Herald.

Took Her Part.

Mamma—You must always remember to take your little sister's part, Tommy. Small Tommy—I do. I took her part of the cake not five minutes ago.—Chicago News.

Original.

"My wife is a most original woman," said Brown. "Why, when I proposed to her instead of saying, 'This is so sudden,' she said, 'Well, I think it's about time.'"

The Man With the Wooden Hat.

A young Scotsman was shewa into the office of a great engineer at Birmingham. He was wearing a hat of extraordinary shape, and at his nervousness at meeting the man of fame he let the hat slip. It fell with a hollow thud upon the floor. The engineer looked with astonishment at the thing. The owner picked it up and apologized for the noise it had caused. It was of wood, he explained. He had made it himself, turning it with his father's lathe. The engineer thought that there must be something in a man who could think out and make such a thing as this. He forthwith engaged him, kept an eye upon him and gave him work of responsibility. The engineer was Boulton; the new man, William Murdock. The man with the wooden hat was sent away to Cornwall, and when he returned it was to light up his master's premises with gas. The mind which first practically applied the coal gas to the purpose of lighting lived inside that wooden hat.—St. James' Gazette.

Good Manners.

A friend of yours and mine has very justly defined good breeding to be "the result of much good sense, some good nature and a little self denial for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them." Taking this for granted—as I think it cannot be disputed—it is astonishing to me that anybody who has good sense and good nature can essentially fail in good breeding. As to the modes of it, indeed, they vary according to persons, places and circumstances and are only to be acquired by observation and experience, but the substance of it is everywhere and eternally the same. Good manners are to particular societies what good morals are to society in general—their cement and security. And as laws are enacted to enforce good morals or at least to prevent the ill effects of bad ones, so there are certain rules of civility, universally implied and received, to enforce good manners and punish bad ones.—Chesterfield.

Made For Fat Men.

One of the narrow arches in the gallery of the chapel at Columbia university is not exactly symmetrical, although the defect is not noticeable to the casual observer. The reason for the widening of the arch after its original construction had rise in a somewhat humorous occurrence. One of the early visitors was a remarkably fat man, who found himself wedged into the arch when he tried to squeeze through and was extricated with some difficulty. The builders, recognizing the possibility of other fat people being numbered among the future visitors, decided to widen the arch, sacrificing symmetry and harmony to practical need, as the pier was so constructed as to bear no loss of width on one of its sides.—New York Globe.

Caribou Horns.

Not one out of every ten female caribou has horns. When they do have them, they are much smaller than those of the bull. The horns of the female have, however, in general many more branches than those of the bull, and they are much more regularly and finely formed. The cows carry their horns much longer than the bulls. They have been seen with their horns in the month of April. The old bulls shed their horns from the 10th to the last of November. They hardly ever carry them after the month of November. The young bulls shed theirs from the first of December until the middle of February. The younger the animal the longer he retains his horns.

Mountain of the Sacred Footprint.

Adam's peak, or Mount Samanala, a rugged mountain in the island of Ceylon, is known throughout the orient as the "Mountain of the Sacred Footprint." In a flat, rocky basin at the foot of this mountain in stone as hard as blue granite there is the perfect imprint of a gigantic human foot, five and one-half feet long by two and one-half feet wide. The Ceylonese Brahmans have a legend to the effect that the imprint was made by Adam, our first parent, but the Buddhists declare that it could have been made by no one but Buddha.

Water Needles.

So penetrating is water at high pressure that only special qualities of cast iron will be tight against it. In the early days of the hydraulic jack it was no uncommon thing to see the water issuing like a fine needle through the metal, and the water needle would penetrate the unwary finger just as readily as a steel one.

Cash or Credit.

Women should not get credit. Neither should men. Cash is the cure. Tradesmen maybe would have a bad time for six or twelve months, and many a lady would have to "lie low," but in the end we would get both our trade and our money, and she would get her dress and at far less cost.—London Opinion.

The Vice Presidency.

"It's sthrange about th' vice prisidincy," said Mr. Dooley. "Th' prisidincy is th' highest office in th' gift iv th' people. Th' vice prisidincy is th' nex' highest an' th' lowest. It isn't a crime exactly. Ye can't be sint to jail f'r it, but it's a kind iv a disgrace."—"Dissertations by Mr. Dooley."

His Hope For Revenge.

Judge (to barber sentenced to death)—If you have a last request, the court will be glad to grant it. Barber—I should like to shave the prosecuting attorney.—Munich Jugend.

To be able to have the things we want, that is riches, but to be able to